Wife of Dedicated Radio 'Ham' Has–Needs–a Sense of Humor

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A WIFE with a dedicated hobbyist needs a sense of humor to weather the hours spent with and apart from him. This wife lists some down to earth complaints and some that are a bit up in space, but one suspects she is a joy to live with, a true treasure to a married hobbyist:

Mrs. Griggs: I read with interest the letter from "Ham Bone" regarding her husband's hobby of amateur radio and would like to add my 2c worth. I sympathize as I, too, am a "ham" widow. My hubby has his shack in the basement, and what a basement! I can hardly get to the washing machine for radio parts and equipment. Oh, he promises every year to spring clean, but after seven years I have given up hope. Does he take the garbage out like other husbands? No, sir! I once made the mistake of telling him if he couldn't take the garbage out, wouldn't he at least find me a larger container. That night he came home from work with a paper sack five feet high. Where he found it I don't know. These fellows really have a sense of humor!

And for what other hobby does a fellow jump out of bed at midnight, look through the window, holler "Aurora," then rush to the basement to tune in DX (or something) 'til 6 o'clock the following morning? The first time I heard that cry I thought the house was on fire! Does he work around the garden?

Again no, unless he's putting up a new radio tower, or stringing a new antenna. At the moment my ham is in the process of putting up a new tower. When I first saw it I was a little concerned about low flying aircraft. Since then he has added several sections and from wafts of conversation coming up from the basement it is going still higher. Now every time a jet flies over I hold my breath.

But let's look on the bright side, "Ham Bone." How many of your friends can go on a shopping spree without getting permission from hubby first? I could be gone for weeks and he would't even miss me 'til the food and coffee ran out!

Visited England

Last year I visited my parents in England. When I returned my ham was waiting for me at the airport, his nose buried in a radio magazine. As I approached him he looked up and said "Hi," as though I was just returning from the ladies' room. Did he ask me if I had a nice trip? Oh, no, he just said, "Guess what! I went to a ham picnic this afternoon. So and so has a new rig in his car and it's a dandy."

Maybe your ham belongs to the ham kaffeeklatsch club as mine does. This "meets" on the air on Sunday morning. Comes 10 a.m., my beloved leaps out of bed, grabs the coffee pot and rushes to the basement to join his friends on the air, and do they gossip! They call it "discussing things," everything from radio equipment to food and family. A favorite topic after radio is food.

Being a working gal, most of the time during the week we have quickie meals prepared while hubby is "tuning over the band" in the basement. So on the weekend I like to prepare the dishes he enjoys most. One of his favorites is chili. Much to my embarrassment he always announces, "Chili for lunch, boys!" I was afraid his friends would think I didn't know how to make anythong else.

So one weekend I made a point of buying two big juicy T-bones. As he rushed past me that Sunday morning on his way to the basement I managed to impress upon him that we were having "T-bones" for dinner. And what do you think? Something got wrong with his set and he couldn't even get out to eat.

The following Sunday when the rig was fixed (you guessed it!) we were having chili again! "Ham Bone," if you are ever in this neighborhood, stop in and we can cry on each other's shoulders. You can't miss the place. We have the most unlandscaped lot, the longest grass in summer, the tallest weeds and the highest radio tower for miles around! W9RXJ'S XYL.

W9RXJ'S XYL: Notwithstanding, I think yours is probably a happy home. And your ham is lucky to have you! I. Q. G.

Mrs. Griggs: The letter from "Ham Bone" inspired me to write you. The problems encountered by such women are not at all unusual. Complaints have often been lodged against husbands who fail to regard family responsibilities as prerequisite to a hobby. On the other hand the radio amateurs themselves have long decried the unbalanced amateur who devotes too much time to his hobby and not enough to his domestic responsibilities. Article 5 of "The Amateur's Code," established by the American Radio Relay league, which represents over 200,000 amateurs throughout the world, states:

"The amateur is balanced . . . radio is his hobby. He never allows it to interfere with any of the duties he owes to his home, his job, his school or his community." Unfortunately some hams refuse to honor this article of faith. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear many amateurs on the air around the clock. We must look at the lady's problem from another angle, however. To many (especially hams), radio provides a fascination which often can not be duplicated.

The thought of throwing a switch and talking to practically any country, colony or island, is too much to resist. We mustn't forget that conversation with people in another part of the nation or world provides a vast reservoir of knowledge on geography, politics, technology, education and social problems that could not be found out side a college classroom.

Notwithstanding this, "Ham Bone" might really have a problem. Her husband could be withdrawing from an undesirable atmosphere in his home. She should check this. He may seek conversation with those whom he can not see. Psychiatric or housewife therapy might be the only solution, all depending on the inside circumstances. Her son may be dazzled by the vast array of equipment in the radio shack. Or he might have an aptitude for electronics or science. Under these circumstances the boy should not be discouraged from his hobby.

A forced participation in school sports, with other people, if the boy doesn't enjoy such associations might frustrate him rather than balance him. Rules should be developed, however, that limit the hours of operation for the boy. His enthusiasm for the hobby might easily lead to reduction in scholastic standings.

I cannot accept the charges by "Ham Bone" that most amateurs are maladjusted. On the contrary, most of us are quite fit. I have been an amateur for seven years. I have been in the navy since I became one. I will be a high school teacher within the next six months. My field of teaching is not even associated with electronics, mathematics or science.

I believe, however, that my association with amateurs will enhance my teaching of the English language, and the numerous conversations in Spanish with hams in Latin America will certainly aid my teaching of Spanish. 73.

73: I am glad to publish your letter. I. Q. G.

CHANNEL CHUCKLES

"Now watch me twist — the dial!"